

AMERICA
15 November 1975

Of Many Things

John Hersey, in his vivid account of life within the Ford White House, reported that the jargon of management consultants was favored among the President's advisers. In the public forum, however, Mr. Ford clearly prefers the metaphor of the athletic field. So, in announcing the sudden changes that he had made in his Administration over the Halloween weekend, he leaned repeatedly on the importance of having "my own team."

President Ford's principal asset thus far has been a public image that made him a man difficult to dislike or distrust, no matter how much one might disagree with his policies. That image is now blurred considerably by the manner in which Mr. Ford conducted the changing of the guard at the Defense Department and the Central Intelligence Agency.

In a press conference on the eve of Election Day, the President denied that there were any political implications in the dismissal of Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger and CIA Director William E. Colby and the relinquishment by Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger of his post as Director of the National Security Council. Nor would the President comment on whether there was any political advantage for him in the announcement by Vice-President Rockefeller that he would not be available for the Vice-Presidential nomination in 1976.

Instead, the President served notice that he was "not worried about any competitor, Democratic or Republican." Candor—that celebrated Ford

family virtue—was not, to use the President's idiom, the game plan.

Conjecture about the court intrigue behind the moves was touched off by the very first reports. Was the new Defense Secretary, Donald H. Rumsfeld, the architect of the new alignment? Were the differences between Secretary Schlesinger and Secretary Kissinger the principal explanation? The President denied that there were any basic differences between the latter two men, and insisted that Mr. Rumsfeld had not influenced his decision. "I did it totally on my own."

The most unsettling of the changes was also the most predictable. The impending dismissal of Mr. Colby as CIA Director has been reported for some months, not because he was held responsible for any of the illegal CIA activity that had been brought to public attention by Congressional investigations, but because he had been too open in admitting such illegality. At a time when the CIA is the object of suspicion, its independence is not confirmed by the appointment of George Bush, a former Republican party chairman, to replace Mr. Colby.

The Ford Administration is unique, as Mr. Rockefeller obliquely reminded the President in his letter of withdrawal, in that neither the President nor the Vice-President was elected by popular ballot. The forthright manner of Gerald R. Ford had offset that liability to some degree, but the spectators will be less trusting in the future when the captain calls his new team into a huddle.

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